



High-Altitude Yak

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Why in News

Recently, the **National Research Centre on Yak (NRCY)** at Dirang in Arunachal Pradesh's West Kameng district has tied up with the **National Insurance Company Ltd.** for insuring the high-altitude yak.

NRCY is a premier research institute exclusively engaged in research and development of yak in India. It was established in 1989 by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The Yak **belong to the Bovini tribe**, which also includes **bison, buffaloes, and cattle**. It can **tolerate temperatures as low as -40 degrees Celsius**.



Adapted for living at high altitudes, they have long hair that hangs off their sides like a curtain, sometimes touching the ground.

- Yaks are **highly valued by Himalayan peoples**. According to Tibetan legend, the **first yaks were domesticated by Tibetan Buddhism founder Guru Rinpoche**.

They are also known as the **lifeline of pastoral nomads in high altitudes of the Indian Himalayan region**.

- **Habitat:**

- They are **endemic to the Tibetan Plateau and the adjacent high-altitude regions**.

Yaks are most **comfortable above 14,000 feet**. They climb to an elevation of 20,000 when foraging and usually don't descend any lower than 12,000 feet.

- The yak-rearing states of India are **Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir**.

The countrywide population trend shows that the **yak population has been decreasing at an alarming rate**. The total yak population in India is **about 58,000**.

- **Threats:**

- **Climate Change:**

The **increasing trend of environmental temperature at high altitudes is resulting in heat stress in yak** during warmer months of the year. This, in turn, is affecting the rhythms of physiological responses of the animal.

- **Inbreeding:**

As wars and conflicts have led to the closing of borders, the yaks outside borders are thought to be **suffering from inbreeding due to the lack of availability of new yak germplasm** from the original yak area.

- **Protection Status of Wild Yak (*Bos mutus*):**

- **IUCN Red list status: Vulnerable**

- IUCN considers the **wild species of yak under *Bos mutus***, while the **domestic form is considered under *Bos grunniens***.

- **CITES: Appendix I**

- **Indian WildLife (Protection) Act of 1972: Schedule I**

Source: TH